March 15 CBS News request:

My team is covering the new interest in the DDT site/s off the LA coast. We are looking for a statement on this. Specifically, we realize that work has been done through NOAA to help mitigate the impact of the sewage outflow damage from the 20th century close to shore. But it seems many decades went by without the deeper disposal site/s for the toxic barrels even being looked into to understand the extent of the possible contamination, let alone work to try to clean it up.
So, we are curious why there has been such a long delay to get working on this portion of the contamination?
And we see that NOAA and Scripps are out there right now studying the bottom... what do you hope to accomplish and what are the next steps? Any chance EPA or the government agencies will take a step to clean this up soon?

EPA Statement:

The historical disposal of industrial waste drums in the deep waters off Southern California is a large and complex issue, and is not limited to the one chemical compound (DDT) nor to one disposal site. EPA, alongside other state and federal agencies, has tracked this issue for many years.

Since the 1980s EPA has been using the Superfund Program to address the releases of DDT and other hazardous substances into the soil and groundwater at the Montrose Chemical Plant Property, as well as the runoff of these substances into stormwater ditches/channels and the sanitary sewer.

Regarding underwater impacts of this contamination, DDT on the close-to-shore Palos Verdes Shelf resulted from industrial waste being disposed of into the sanitary sewer, then traveling through the sewer system and ultimately to the ocean.
In the mid-1990s, EPA's Superfund Program began investigating, designing, and implementing cleanup actions at the Palos Verdes Shelf, as the consumption of contaminated seafood harvested from the area had been well documented and presented significant risk. As part of this effort, EPA completed cleanup of a portion of the sanitary sewer with significant contamination in the mid-1990s.

For twenty years, EPA has worked with local partners to implement extensive and highly successful measures to protect the public from the most imminent risks presented by DDT contamination on the Palos Verdes Shelf. This has included educational outreach, fish market inspection programs, and a commercial catch ban – all to prevent or deter consumption of fish contaminated with DDT and other hazardous substances.

Regarding the deeper ocean dumping sites, which are separate from the Palos Verdes Shelf, state agencies and federal agencies such as NOAA examined DDT disposal at ocean sites in the 1980s and 1990s. The State of California has not requested that the ocean dump sites be considered for listing as a Superfund Site on the EPA National Priorities List. However, based on recent scientific research, EPA believes that this issue should be examined again. EPA is collaborating with state and federal agencies to convene a meeting once the NOAA and Scripps Institute studies are complete to discuss these dump sites, as well as the state's perspective on this issue.

March 22 CBS News followup questions:

1. The total Montrose settlement was $140 Million, correct?

A: Yes. EPA, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), and the State and Federal Natural Resource Trustees received a total of $140 million from multiple parties (including Montrose Chemical Corporation) as part of multiple settlements. Of the $140 million, over $60 million went to the Natural Resource Trustees (please confirm the exact amount with them) for their work, and $66 million was allocated to EPA and DTSC to recover past response costs and address Palos Verdes Shelf.

2. The ocean contamination superfund site was 17 square miles, correct?

A: At complex Superfund Sites such as Montrose, EPA frequently divides the site into separate sections referred to as "Operable Units". The Montrose site is divided into six such units. Operable Unit #5 Palos Verdes Shelf is approximately 88 square kilometers (approximately 34 square miles). The 17 square miles number was from a 1994 United States Geological Survey report. Subsequent data showed that the DDT- and PCB- contaminated sediments covered a larger area, and EPA thus expanded the Operable Unit.

3. The ocean contamination site was added to the superfund list in 1989, correct?

A: The overall Montrose Chemical Corp. Superfund Site was included on the National Priorities List of federal Superfund sites on October 4, 1989. In 1996, EPA added Operable Unit #5 Palos Verdes Shelf and began work.